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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y ((PARA NUMBERS))

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SUBJECT: YAVLINSKIY'S POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
OBAMA-MEDVEDEV SUMMIT

REF: 08 MOSCOW 3288

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle; Reason: 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On July 1, Ambassador Beyrle met with former Yabloko leader Grigoriy Yavlinskiy prior to the Obama-Medvedev summit to hear his views on U.S.-Russian relations, as well as his thoughts on how the U.S. should best approach bilateral relations. His top five recommendations pertained to Ukraine, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, Afghanistan, Russian internal issues, and disarmament. End Summary.

Yavlinskiy's Russian Foreign Policy Recommendations

¶2. (C) Yavlinskiy recommended that President Obama focus on five top foreign policy goals during the July 6-8 summit, which he described as a key moment to make progress in U.S.-Russian relations. Yavlinskiy recounted his June 11 meeting with President Medvedev to discuss his recommendations, noting that Medvedev was not on board with them. Nevertheless, he argued that "Obama opened the door for dialogue" and these issues were important in debates between the two presidents. Yavlinskiy stressed that the main problem between the two countries is a lack of understanding, which is needed before the two can cooperate.

¶3. (C) Yavlinskiy expounded on the five most important issues -- Ukraine, ABM, Afghanistan, Russian internal issues, and disarmament -- as follows:

-- The first practical step in improving relations is for the two presidents to make an agreement on Ukraine, guaranteeing its independence and territory. The problems in Ukraine today are "more substantial" than what happened in Georgia and the presidents must agree on this issue prior to making progress in other areas.

-- The two countries should review ABM. There is a lot of incorrect information about this subject and both sides should work to create a technical group. He suggested each side provide 50 technical experts who could then report back to their respective countries.

-- The U.S. should articulate that it needs Russia's help on Afghanistan. Yavlinskiy stated that "some U.S. allies" are trafficking drugs.

-- The U.S. should state explicitly that it will not interfere in Russia's internal affairs. Obama would be very influential during the visit if he emphasizes that Russia will never overcome corruption without law, civil society, or an independent media.

-- The issue of disarmament is tactical, but it is also a measure of trust. The difference of military potential is also dramatic and unbalanced in that the U.S. has more weapons.

Yavlinskiy's Strategy for U.S. Approach Towards Russia

14. (C) Yavlinskiy formulated a strategy for a new U.S. approach to Russia, based on discussions with Putin and Medvedev. He urged President Obama to consider using seven tactics as follows during this "special moment" to make change:

-- The U.S. must stop treating Russia like it is an "undeveloped America." Russia is a country that is qualitatively different from America.

-- It would be instructive to review U.S.-Russian relations in the 1970s and 1980s when there was a convergence of ideas. This period was during the Cold War, but then Gorbachev came to power, U.S.-Russia relations improved, and ultimately the Cold War ended.

-- The U.S. needs to once again prioritize Russia. There should be very wide cooperation between both countries.

-- It would be useful for the U.S. to explain how it sees Russia's role in 50 years. Russia is going through an identity crisis, so it would be beneficial to support Russia's leadership by articulating that America has no doubt that Russia will have a significant role in the future.

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-- It is necessary to have common political standards, despite differences. There should be more norms and standards between the two countries.

-- The U.S. should put its house in order and set an example to the rest of the world. It should articulate that it will not meddle in Russia's internal affairs.

-- Obama should say that Russia is a great country, but add a probing question about how the Russians are experiencing certain social problems, such as mentioning the early age at which people are dying compared to citizens in other developed nations.

Comment

15. (C) Yavlinskiy is an opposition leader with access, if not influence, within the Kremlin. Although he stepped down in 2008 as Yabloko's chairman, he remains the party's most credible voice on foreign relations.

BEYRLE